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Three out of four hospital patients suffer from malnutrition regardless of their pathology

24.10.2007

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A study of 817 patients conducted in the Department of Nutrition and Bromatology at the University of Granada (UGR), in collaboration with the Unit of Nutrition and Dietetics at the hospital Virgen de las Nieves (Granada, Spain) of 817 patients, showed that 75% of hospitalised patients suffer from malnutrition regardless of their pathology.

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The study, which was carried out in patients older than 18 in all the departments of the hospital except Psychiatry and Ophthalmology, showed that, although hospitals have enough resources to prevent malnutrition, it is caused due to the poor administration of resources and the lack of importance given to nutrition.

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The study, which was carried out by Gabriela Lobo Támer and led by researchers M^a Dolores Ruiz López and Antonio Pérez de la Cruz, analysed a series of biochemical parameters defining the nutritional status, such as albumin — a protein found in blood plasma that synthesizes in the liver. Thus, 75% of patients analysed had less than 3.5 grams of this protein per volume of blood (milliliter) — the minimum to consider that patients are well nourished.

Lobo Támer highlighted that her study showed that 75% of patients "are already undernourished when admitted," although 40-50% of analysed subjects' condition worsened while staying at the hospital, depending on the department they were admitted to.

Hospital stay and treatment costs

This study also revealed, for the first time, how much it costs to the Public Administration both hospital stay and treatment for each patient. The average is "between 3,500 € and 6,000 €" (only for food and medication). Hospital staff, diagnoses, fungibles, etc. are not taken into account). Oncology and Hematology being the most resource-consuming services. "Patients who undergo heart surgery and those who have a bone marrow transplant cost the most to the health system, as sometimes these operations cost more than 35,000 €."

The study concluded that the times at which food is served in Spanish hospitals "are not the most appropriate", and contribute to malnutrition. "It would be advisable to adapt eating hours to better suit the Spanish lifestyle. In Spain lunch and dinner is later than in the rest of Europe and patients have to change their eating habits during their hospital stay."

Antonio Marín Ruiz | Quelle: alphagalileo
Weitere Informationen: www.ugr.es/~mdruiz/
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